

TRIAGE: The Cute, Cuddly Side of Disaster Response

The Center for Domestic Preparedness, located in Anniston, Ala., strives to be the training facility of choice for emergency response providers across the nation. One innovative approach to training is using stuffed animals during triage training in several courses. Responder students must prioritize the needs of the sick and wounded following a mock explosion. And what they find may be a furry experience: as they enter the mock explosion site, they find more than 75 stuffed animal 'victims' tagged with ages and symptoms. Time is of the essence and the students quickly decide which 'victims' are viable.

The CDP training staff has been using this triage technique for the past 10 years, and has found it provides an effective representation of a mass casualty incident. Instructors have also observed that the furry stuffed animals touch the sensitive side of responder students. The students have 30 seconds per 'victim' to triage as many as possible, using the START (Simple Triage And Rapid Treatment) method.

"This approach is not about the teddy bears," said Rick Dickson, assistant director of training delivery. "It is about the process, skills and abilities achieved that may save lives in a mass casualty event."

CDP training opportunities include 38 courses that offer emergency response providers a wide range of training. All CDP courses are available as resident training and select courses are available through non-resident programs that include mobile training units — at no cost to the responder or their jurisdiction. All training is funded by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The CDP features interdisciplinary training for emergency response providers in 10 diverse disciplines: Emergency Management, Emergency Medical Services, Fire Service, Governmental Administrative, Hazardous Materials, Healthcare, Law Enforcement, Public Health, Public Safety Communications, and Public Works. For additional information about training opportunities at the CDP, visit <http://cdp.dhs.gov>.